

Why Giving Large Portions of Our Finances to Church Might Require Disobeying God

Is it possible we might be disobedient to God by “giving it all away” to kingdom work?

While probably terrifying, we have to admit it feels extremely spiritual to consider the possibility of selling all we have and giving all of our money away for the sake of the Kingdom. It’s hard to argue with someone who endeavors to bless others in this extravagant manner.

In fact, many years ago I met a family who did just that. They sold everything and traveled the nation by horse and carriage preaching the Gospel. What a sight that was, watching a homemade carriage that contained all of their earthly goods being pulled by two horses right down the highway in front of my house in Omaha, Arkansas. They lived, cooked, ate and slept in that makeshift trailer. My parents invited them to pull over and enjoy dinner with us. Their horses ate the grass in our rural yard while we ate and then sang worship songs together. I’ll admit, I was blown away as a young man by their fervor for Jesus. It was clear materialism didn’t have a hold on them.

Though their devotion was remarkable, and I cannot and will not determine the appropriateness of their individual decision to give it all away, I am going to argue that, for most, such an extreme move just might require disobedience to God.

Sell It All and Follow Jesus?

“Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow Me” (Luke 18:22).

It's clear in Scripture that we must all be radical givers. I believe firmly that we must all respond to the call to give in great measure to the church, to ministry works and to people in need. It's a joy to do so! Giving large amounts to our local church should be a goal for all of us. Further, financially blessing mission works, the poor, servers in the restaurants where we eat and families in need is a high honor for every believer.

Many ministers today over-simplify the call to give, however. The scripture most often used might be found in the book of Luke: "Give, and it will be given to you: Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will men give unto you. For with the measure you use, it will be measured unto you" (Luke 6:38).

The exhortation is clear: give financially and you will receive financially. The more you give, the more you receive.

I believe this. I've watched it manifest in my own life, not magically via some simplistic formula, but rather through joyful giving marked by expectant faith and a long-term devotion to bless others. It's not about me and my bank account. It's about those I'm serving. The result of that has been a lot of abundant life in Jesus and financial blessing in some truly miraculous ways. God loves to give back.

However, I believe pastors do great disservice to those under their care and the ministries they are leading if they simplify the call to "give more, receive more." In fact, preachers rebuking the materialism in others to manipulate more extravagant giving to feed their own materialism just might be one of the darkest forms of evil behind the pulpit today. Some pastors have evil intent, but thankfully, most don't. The majority who emphasize extravagant giving are simply short-sighted or misguided. There's more to it than continually encouraging more and more giving.

As I stated above, I believe it's possible for pastors to unwittingly encourage people into a place of disobedience to God by asking them to give large sums while ignoring the call to steward what remains.

Why did Jesus instruct the rich ruler to sell everything and give it to the poor? The reason is simple: The rich ruler's heart was surrendered to mammon, the spiritual force behind the money he so loved and trusted in.

So, I do agree, if our heart is devoted to mammon, by all means, give it all away, and fast. Jesus was extreme when he called people to separate themselves from anything that would compromise their eternities. "And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. For it is profitable that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Matt. 5:29-30).

If your eye or your hand or your money causes you to sin, get rid of it: ""No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24).

However, as long as we can turn from the sin, and truly surrender our heart to Jesus, such extreme measures are not necessary, including the call to give all of our money away. You can keep your eyes in their sockets and your money in your pockets. Your money won't stay in your pockets for long though. It has work to do.

You Are Called to Multiply

Successful entrepreneurs and businesspeople will understand this principle easily. Their money is simply a tool. It's used to expand their business, make investments and multiply their

resources so they can have greater and greater impact.

Don't ever look at a wealthy Christian in judgment. Many of them are doing exactly what God wants them to do. They aren't supposed to give everything to the poor or to the church. Their gift is much better used by multiplying resources and giving extravagantly year after year than by simply giving away what they have a single time. The result would be lack of resources and an inability to do what God has called them to do. If you have one million dollars, don't give it all away. Multiply it and give millions and millions away.

If we give all we have to the church, or more than God has called us to, we won't have enough to put to work for the sake of multiplication. We must give the correct amount and invest the correct amount to see the greatest kingdom impact.

In the parable of the talents, we see the other exhortation that pastors should be communicating in addition to simple giving. If they encouraged people to invest their money, to build businesses, to give a little less so they have a little more to leverage greater multiplication, we'd see a lot of money coming into the kingdom and a lot of lives dramatically touched.

Simply giving and waiting for the money to return is not enough. We are crippling people financially when we don't add the call to multiply into the equation. In fact, we'll see in the following passage that God will take what was given to people who failed to multiply and redistribute it to those who have been most successful.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and entrusted his goods to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his ability. And immediately he took his journey. He who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five

talents. So also, he who had received two gained another two. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

"After a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. He who had received five talents came and brought the other five talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted to me five talents. Look, I have gained five talents more.'

"His master said to him, 'Well done, you good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter the joy of your master.'

"He who had received two talents also came and said, 'Master, you entrusted me with two talents. See, I have gained two more talents besides them.'

"His master said to him, 'Well done, you good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter the joy of your master.'

"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Master, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow. So I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

"His master answered, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not winnowed. Then you ought to have given my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

"So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from him who has nothing, even

what he has will be taken away. And throw the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'”(Matt. 25:14-30).

It's a long passage, so for those of you who tend to skim articles, allow me to sum it up.

God expects us to use money He gives us in strategic ways to ensure it is multiplied. Giving to the church isn't our primary financial strategy. It's important, and I believe we should always give at least the tithe. Even those who don't believe the tithe is required for New Covenant Christians, they all admit that we should give extravagantly. So, start with a little less than extravagance at 10 percent. Also, beyond the 10 percent, give regularly to missions and to people in need. That's the foundation.

Then, use what remains to invest, develop businesses, pay for training in a field of work you will enjoy and that will be prosperous or by strategically growing your financial portfolio in other ways so you can faithfully multiply what God has given you. God takes the call to give seriously. Based on what we see in the passage above, he takes the call to multiply finances very seriously.

I've met many, many Christians over the years who have been faithful givers, but who are barely making it financially. The missing piece for them is most always the biblical call to invest and multiply. Giving is powerful, but it's not enough. Ultimately, God wants us to give much more than we currently are. The way it comes is not through more simple giving, but rather through shrewd, Holy-Spirit directed multiplication.

Pastors who only focus on giving will produce a culture of lack. Those who awaken the God-given ability to multiply wealth will see great resource come.

Here's a powerful passage from Deuteronomy that mirrors the

truths of the rich ruler and of the talents that we have been looking at:

Otherwise, you may say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth." But you must remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to get wealth, so that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is today.

If you ever forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, then I testify against you today that you will surely perish (Deut. 8:17-19).

God has given us all the power to get wealth, but we must not serve mammon, the lord of money.

Giving our wealth away, however much that may be, feels like the most spiritual thing to do. On the contrary, it very well may be a major misstep. The rich young ruler was instructed to give it all away because Jesus knew his heart was bound by it. However, Jesus revealed in the parable of the talents that we have a sober mandate to multiply the wealth God resources us with. If mammon is your master, give your money away. If Jesus is your master, use your money to multiply your wealth so the kingdom can be resourced.